

A New Law Relating to Wood Destroying Organism Inspections

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), in cooperation with structural pest inspectors, home inspectors, and with support from industry, recently introduced legislation to address the growing problem of substandard pest inspections conducted by unlicensed or untrained individuals. Although a law requiring the licensing of structural pest inspectors has been in effect since 1991, some have chosen to ignore it. Substitute House Bill 2378, written to address these problems, passed this legislative session and was signed into law on March 24th by Governor Locke. The law took effect July 1, 2000.

WSDA has the responsibility to oversee people conducting pest inspections and make certain they are in compliance with state law. The law is very clear. Any individual who inspects properties for wood destroying organisms (termites, carpenter ants, rot fungus), damage by these pests, or conducive conditions leading to their development (excessive moisture, cellulose debris, inaccessible areas, earth to wood contact, or inadequate ventilation) must be properly licensed and insured.

This new law added the following requirements for individuals who conduct wood destroying organism inspections.

Advertising - If a pest inspector is not licensed, they cannot advertise that they are licensed. With this legislation, WSDA will be better able to take enforcement action against those who misrepresent themselves.

Insurance - State law will now require pest inspectors to carry a surety bond or errors & omissions (E&O) insurance with minimum amounts of \$25,000 and \$50,000, respectively. An E&O insurance policy must offer coverage for three years beyond the inspection. This will help protect inspectors, their customers, and others.

Inspection Control Numbers - This is the heart of the new legislation. Inspection Control Numbers (ICNs) will now be required on all pest inspection reports. These numbers will be obtained, free of charge, from WSDA. Pest inspectors cannot receive an ICN if they are not properly licensed and insured.

All pest inspection reports for a single property for a single transaction will have the same ICN. The ICN should be recorded in the upper right hand corner on the front page of their report. An ICN will consist of nine (9) digits and have the format NNNNLLNNN, where N is a number and L is a letter. Recipients of pest inspection reports should look for this number. If it's not there, the WDO inspection report is invalid. Anyone who reviews these forms can check the WSDA web site (<http://www.wa.gov/agr/pmd>) to see if a pest inspector is properly licensed.

If you receive a report that does not have an ICN, what should you do? Ask the pest inspector the following questions. Are you licensed? Are you insured? Where is the ICN? If these questions cannot be answered to your satisfaction, you should find another pest inspector. WSDA recommends that only licensed, insured, and trained pest inspectors be used.

A structural pest inspection is the most important inspection conducted on a property. Damages uncovered during these inspections have the greatest potential cost of repair. Help us help you receive the best service possible. Make certain the pest inspector you hire is licensed, insured, and a valid ICN appears on their report.

If you have questions about this new law, please contact Dan Suomi at 360.902.2044 or via email at dsuomi@agr.wa.gov.